

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-06 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

 DOTE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 L-02 /024 W

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R 201255Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1956

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 15221

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR

SUBJECT: TIMING OF NEW CIVIL AIR NEGOTIATIONS

REF: BEIRUT, 14913; 12167; A-93 OF MAY 29, 1974

1. ACCORDING TO TMA PRESIDENT ABOU-HAIDER, IT IS NOT COMPLETELY CERTAIN THAT WE SHALL RECEIVE SHORTLY A NOTE FROM THE GOL REQUESTING NEGOTIATIONS ON THE NEW CIVIL AIR AGREEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IN ABOU-HAIDER'S OPINION, A REQUEST FOR EARLY NEGOTIATIONS COULD LEAD TO A SITUATION IN WHICH A DEADLOCK WOULD RESULT. IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE, HE BELIEVES, FOR INFORMAL SOUDINGS TO BE MADE TO DETERMINE AT WHAT TIME BETWEEN NOW AND SEPTEMBER 1975 THE U.S. WOULD CONSIDER IT MOST LIKELY THAT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD PROVE SUCCESSFUL. ONCE SUCH A DATE WAS DETERMINED, ABOU-HAIDER WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO HAVE THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES CONCUR.

2. PAST EXPERIENCE HAS PROVED THAT ABOU-HAIDER'S INFLUENCE WITH LEBANESE AUTHORITIES SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED AND WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT HE DOES HAVE ENOUGH INFLUENCE TO MAKE HIS VIEWS ON TIMING

PREVAIL. AT THE SAME TIME WE DO NOT WISH TO IMPLY THAT ABOU-HAIDER IS ACTING OUT OF THE KINDNESS OF HIS HEART. HE OBVIOUSLY HAS A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF SELF-INTEREST IN SEEING TO IT THAT THE ANTICIPATED
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NEGOTIATIONS PROVE SUCCESSFUL AND QUITE LOGICALLY

BELIEVES THAT LEAVING QUESTIONS OF TIMING TO THE U.S. SIDE WOULD FACILITATE THIS GOAL.

3. FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, WE BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS SITUATION, AT LEAST TO THE POINT OF INDICATING INFORMALLY TO ABOU-HAIDER WHEN WE THINK WE SHOULD BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS, AVOIDING DIRECTLY HOWEVER ANY IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE OBLIGATING OURSELVES TO HIM. THIS WOULD PER FORCE NECESSITATE ON OUR PART, INTER ALI, DISCUSSIONS WITH THE U.S. AIRLINES INVOLVED IN THIS MATTER. ALTHOUGH THE AIRLINES COULD BE APPROACHED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, IT MIGHT BE ADVISABLE TO PUT THIS OFF SUGGESTION RESTS IN THE FACT THAT ABOU-HAIDER PLANS TO BE IN THE STATES TOWARD THE END OF JANUARY. AT THAT TIME HE WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH VARIOUS AIRLINES. THIS IN TURN WILL PROBABLY CAUSE THE AIRLINES IN QUESTION TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM AND THEIR VIEWS THEN MIGHT BE OF MORE VALUE THAN AT PRESENT IN ASSISTING US TO REACH A DECISION.

4. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING DEPARTMENT'S INITIAL THINKING ON APPROACHING PROBLEM ALONG ABOVE SUGGESTED LINES. MEANWHILE WE PLAN TO TAKE A FRESH SOUNDING ON MEA'S PRESENT POSITION ON TIMING-YET ANOTHER FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE MOST OPPORTUNE DATE FROM A U.S. POINT OF VIEW.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CIVIL AVIATION, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BEIRUT15221
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740370-1108
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741220/aaaaaqye.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 74 14913, 74 12167, 74 A-93, 74 OF MAY 29, 74 1974
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 AUG 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <19 MAR 2003 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TIMING OF NEW CIVIL AIR NEGOTIATIONS
TAGS: EAIR, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005